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Communication and authenticity: Transformations of the self in the digital age

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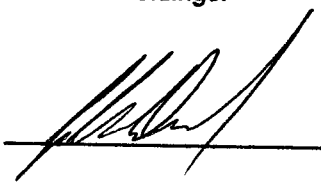

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Communication and Authenticity:

Transformations of the Self in the Digital Age

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John Dowd

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Communication and Authenticity: Transformations of the Self in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Through an examination of disembodied forms of communication and technological discourse, this project explores the concepts of authenticity and its implications for communication research. Situated within phenomenological notions of embodiment, authenticity can serve as an important tool for doing rhetorical criticism. It provides an ethical component to criticism that is sorely lacking within many social scientific approaches to the study of human communication, which operate under the guise of objectivity. As authenticity, subjectivity, and embodiment are inescapably connected and as all three provide the foundation for this project, chapter one provides a working definition of each. It is argued that as embodied, the technologies we use to communicate impact our sensory installment within the world, which in turn both enables and constrains various modes of being. Chapter two demonstrates the therapeutic functions of technological discourse, which emerge in the form of various escapisms. Included are escapisms from clutter, from the confines of modern life, and finally the escape from essentially *everything*, through the incessant push of personalized, "around the clock" entertainment. Chapter three illustrates the disciplining function of technological discourse and maintains that when proselytized from various scientific pulpits, this discourse becomes an extremely influential power grid which encourages more debased and narrower forms of authenticity. Finally, the merits of authenticity based criticism are offered and it is argued that this form of criticism is valuable in that it avoids the traditional pitfalls of both modern and postmodern notions of subjectivity.

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Introduction

Situated within phenomenological notions of embodiment, I argue that authenticity can serve as an important tool for doing rhetorical criticism. It enhances critique by providing moral and ethical components to criticism that are intentionally ignored in postmodern approaches to the study of human communication. In many postmodern schools of thought notions of a moral foundation are disregarded as mere manifestations of a particular historical epoch. Thus, the postmodern subject has no rational means of evaluating preferences in relation to judgments of truth or morality.

We find that a turn to the social sciences yields similar roadblocks to the study of cultural phenomena. Rather than provide a basis from which to evaluate the movement and motivations behind cultural proclivities, social scientific explanations typically shy away from making claims based on moral ideals. Taylor states that, "[We] find these social changes explained in terms of the desire for greater wealth, or power, or the means of survival or control over others. Though all these things can be woven into moral ideals, they need not be, and so explanation in terms of them is considered sufficiently 'hard' and 'scientific' (Taylor, 1991, p. 20). Said otherwise, these descriptions fail to account for the human equation by resorting to detached, 'hard' explanations of cultural phenomena.

Thus, through an examination of disembodied forms of communication and technological discourse, this project explores the concepts of authenticity and its implications for communication research. As authenticity, subjectivity, and embodiment are inescapably connected and as all three provide the foundation for this project, chapter one provides a working definition of each. I then argue that as embodied, our sensory

installment within the world is inevitably altered through the technologies we use to communicate. This in turn both enables and constrains various modes of world-engagement. Said otherwise, the sensory reconfigurations that occur through use of communicative technologies can lead to flatter, more trivialized forms of authenticity.

As a means of tracking this phenomenon I argue that a fresh articulation of selfhood is needed[1]. This articulation must contend with the varying and often conflicting definitions of selfhood that are prevalent in much theorizing. Whether it comes from within or from outside of the discipline, rhetorical scholars would be well served by a re-articulation of the human subject. This concept of selfhood must neither neglect the postmodern concerns of systematic oppression, nor ignore the creative and agentive powers of a modern self. As we will soon see, Anton (2001) has already articulated this notion of selfhood. However, the current project seeks to reveal its potential contributions to critical rhetoric. This collaboration will serve to broaden the net that rhetoricians cast when doing criticism.

Rhetoric, in order to fully realize its praxial impact, needs to embrace the embodied subject and accept authenticity as a vital component of criticism. First, however, we must re-claim the modern subject, an embodied and agentive subject possessing creative and regenerative powers and thus, able to *act* upon his/her surround. This flies in the face of much rhetorical theorizing based largely (or solely) on discursive/linguistic practices. While discourse is a central characteristic of selfhood and society, I align myself with those authors who suggest that a fundamental embodied ontology makes any and all social and symbolic experience possible (see Anton, 2001; Langsdorf, 1997).

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[1] It should be noted that throughout this project subjectivity and selfhood are used interchangeably.

Moving out of existential phenomenology and media ecology, I will show how the qualitative differences inherent to various communicative technologies invariably impact a culture through breach or reconfiguration of the body's sensory capacities. That is I will illuminate the relationship between individuals and their technological environments. This includes the investigation of both technology as well as the discourse that surrounds the use and valuation of it. Whether by design or not media ecology and existential phenomenology have much in common as both are concerned with issues of the body.

Briefly, media ecologists explore the way in which various technologies, as environments, impact individuals and societies. In other words, "Media ecology looks into the matter of how media of communication affect human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival...Media ecology is the study of media as environments" (Postman, 1970). This is important as many proponents and scholars of technology largely ignore the ways in which these alterations of the self, via communicative technology, might lead to less authentic modes of being.

While a full treatment of selfhood is beyond the scope of this project, drawing out the ways in which it traces back to embodiment will go far in elucidating the impacts of both communicative technologies and technological discourse on authenticity. Given the issues that are being explored, a situating of selfhood within both phenomenology and media ecology will advance many of the claims made within this work.

Once a firmly anchored conception of authenticity and selfhood is in place, and once we understand the reconfigurations that occur when shifts in the communicative

environment arise, chapter two explores how technology is presented as therapy - as the personal corrective for problems more appropriately conceived of as social. I argue that the therapeutic is visible in technological discourse, which offers consumers endless forms of escapism. Included are escapisms from clutter, from the confines of modern life, and finally the escape from essentially *everything*, through the incessant push of personalized, "around the clock" entertainment.

Following an examination of the therapeutic, chapter three reveals the disciplining function of technological discourse through an examination of the social networking site known as *Facebook*. I will demonstrate how the self is disciplined through both the normalizing judgment and ultimately, through the gaze. As users of the website give themselves over to their profiles they are subjected to objectified and normalized standards. Again, this is a direct result of the disembodied nature of Facebook and other social networking sites that utilize photos and categorical data.

Additionally, chapter three performs a closer inspection of discourse promulgated by many vanguards of unmitigated technological advance and reveals a fundamental ignorance concerning the impact of these technologies. Through both discipline and the use of ultimate terms, we are not only forced down this path but are told that alternatives are nonexistent. One writer for *Forbes* magazine tells us that, "There is no question: Any attempt to stop the Internet from swallowing all forms of communication is bound to be futile—eventually. The question is only: How quickly will the future arrive?" (Wolley, 2005).

The question of "How quickly" is already being answered. Ray Kurzweil is an inventor and engineer, the recipient of 12 honorary doctorates, the MIT-Lemelson Prize

and the National Medal of Technology, and has been inducted into the National Inventor's Hall of Fame. His most recent book addresses the above by suggesting that the shroud of the *Singularity* (2005) has begun to fall. The *Singularity* refers to technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history. Kurzweil explains that "within a few decades, machine intelligence will surpass human intelligence, leading to The Singularity...The implications include the merger of biological and nonbiological intelligence, immortal software-based humans, and ultra-high levels of intelligence that expand outward in the universe at the speed of light" (Kurzweil, 2005).

As arguably *the* central proponent of unmitigated technological advance, many are enamored by Kurzweil's vision of the "non-biological" human. His book, *The Singularity is Near*, was the thirteenth most blogged about book of 2005 (New York Times, 2005). An introduction by a writer for The Washington Times begins, "Praised as the Thomas Edison of the 21st century, Ray Kurzweil was named one of '16 revolutionaries who made America,' along with great inventors of the last two centuries. Forbes magazine called him "the ultimate thinking machine" and the Wall Street Journal dubbed him 'the restless genius'" (de Borchgrave, 2006). Despite being published in the fourth quarter, *The Singularity* still reached number four on Amazon's "bestsellers in science" list of 2005 (amazon.com, 2005). The serious attention Kurzweil's work is receiving is difficult to ignore and thus, an analysis of his major claims will greatly contribute to a much needed understanding of the rhetorical devices at play within much of technological discourse.

Given how many technology enthusiasts envision a time when the human and computer merge (*see* Kurzweil, 2005, *On Merging with Machines*), the critical distance required to assess disembodied communication and its impact on human interaction becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. As I will later argue, this is due to technology becoming environmental, and without this distance we are no more aware of our technological environments than a fish is of water. This puts us at risk of succumbing perhaps to unforeseen vices of a society saturated with disembodied forms of communication. For example, Dreyfus's (2001) citing of a research project on Internet use demonstrates how lack of both psychological and embodied presence contributes to depression and loneliness. As Dreyfus indicates, "This surprising discovery shows that the Internet user's disembodiment has profound and unexpected effects. Presumably, it affects people in ways that are different from the way most tools do because it can become the main way its users relate to the rest of the world" (2001, pp. 3-4).

Left unchecked this discourse greatly contributes to the eradication of richer dialogical practices and understandings of self. Rather than encouraging richer forms of social interaction it encourages a fixation on the self through feeding from/into a culture of individualized consumption and entertainment. Taylor (1991) noted this as one of the three major concerns of modernity, that of rampant individualism. He argued that people lost a "broader vision" of humanity due to this fixation on their individual lives. Interestingly enough, Taylor cites Tocqueville as an early observer of this phenomenon in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1899). Taylor states, "Democratic equality, says Tocqueville, draws the individual towards himself...In other words, the dark side of

individualism is a centering on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society" (Taylor, 1991, p. 4).

Thus, similar to Taylor's concern regarding rampant individualism it is argued that technological discourse and subsequently, disembodied forms of communication, function by wrapping the individual within oneself. Contrary to popular belief, it is argued that the nature of disembodied forms of communication do not open one up to the world but rather, closes one off from their immediate physical surroundings further intensifying one embodied sense over the others. By doing so this form of rhetoric covers over the many consequences that may (and have) arrived due to rapid and widespread changes in our communicative environments. This blind allegiance to the visions of many technological prophets must be interrogated if we are to survive our descent into the digital maelstrom.

This is not to suggest that consumers are mere pawns who passively offer their obedience but rather, that disciplining and therapeutic functions of technological rhetoric operate in such a way as to recede from focal awareness thereby tacitly perpetuating and/or encouraging various normative standards within society. Critical rhetoric and the rhetoric of therapy best serve the ends of this project in that the former seeks to uproot and "demystify the conditions of domination" (McKerrow, 1989), while the latter explores how technology itself is presented as therapy - as the personal corrective for problems more appropriately conceived of as social. Technological discourse closes individuals off from deeper and more meaningful social engagements. It is precisely the "mystification", "conditions of domination", and the individualizing of larger social ills that chapters two and three seek to reveal.

As previously stated however, what makes any and all of this possible is our fundamental condition of being. The dimensions that constitute a human self and through which authenticity arises, also make us susceptible to more in-authentic and self-indulgent forms of being. Thus it is important to understand the phenomenological grounding that we inhabit. It is vital that we understand how, "The lived-body is thus not a thing among other things within a pre-given world (i.e., yet another thing). Embodiment is a special activity…by which world, objects, and selves come to be" (Anton, 2001, p. 19).

In order to understand the social and symbolic self, we must first come to terms with the embodied self. We will reckon with embodiment shortly, for now a review here of some basic treatments of the human subject (i.e. self) is relevant.

Authenticity, Selfhood, and Technology

Subjectivity is most generally defined as the condition of being a person, i.e., "How a person is and is made a subject by being subjected to their social, cultural, and natural environments" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 404). Questions of identity deal more specifically with a person's self image and/or their image in the eyes of others within their societies and cultures. At this point, various key concepts relating to both subjects and identities must be articulated. These concepts are essentialism, coherence, language, and agency (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 405).

Essentialism refers to the idea that we, as individual persons, have a *true* or core self (Kamberelis & Scott, 1992). Under this model, "Persons are conceptualized as unique and unified rational agents" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 405). Conversely, the postmodern subject or anti-essentialist is de-centered, lacking a core or *true* self. Anton and Peterson use women's movements as a useful illustration of de-centered subjects. The first women's movement of the late 1800's early 1900's struggled with differences of race, class, and religion. Some women of the era argued for temperance and suffrage, thus supporting and enhancing the "traditional patriarchal nuclear family" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 405). Others in this movement challenged tradition largely with arguments concerning employment and voting rights. Black women often drew connections between women's oppression and racism in order to combat both (Anton & Peterson, 2003).

During the second wave of the 1960's and '70's, largely middle-class, white, heterosexual feminists were accused of neglecting the needs of poorer women, women of ethnic minority, and lesbians (Anton & Peterson, 2003). Thus, it became apparent that

even though many women may share certain biological qualities, not all women share the same cultural and/or political experiences, interests or needs (Anton & Peterson, 2003). This recognition expanded feminist discourses, which, alongside social constructionist and postmodern discourses, have interrogated the difficulties and risks of essentializing the multiple and de-centered self (Strickland, 2002). The structuralisms of Levi-Strauss and Saussure also demonstrate this belief and begin a move toward the dissolution of the human self. Schrag (1980) argues that this central theme appears throughout structuralist literature and is widely accepted today.

Various schools of postmodern thought are even more radical on their assaults on selfhood (Anton, 2001). Scholars following the likes of Derrida and Lyotard argue for the very deconstruction of the self to show how it is a "fleeting and eluding phenomenon" (p. 10). However, despite this trend many argue that such a move to completely abolish the unified/essential subject is unwise. Within various spheres of existence, be they political, social, and/or economic, it is obvious that individual rights and consequences are very materially attached to persons and/or groups (Anton & Peterson, 2003). We certainly would not want to essentialize or limit a subject to one or a few particular identities. However, many scholars (Fuss, 1989; Appiah, 1995) have shown how, "notions of essential subjects, or a least temporarily essential subjects posited for strategic purposes, should not be so easily dismissed" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 405).

In relation to essentialism, coherence refers to the ability or tendency of an individual self to remain a coherent whole. Socially, coherent selves are, "Selves whose various roles, actions, and self-assessments make sense in relation to each other and in relation to larger social and cultural expectations" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 405).

Coherence is oftentimes a desirable state for us as individuals as it can indicate a sense of harmony and stability within our surroundings. However, we may not like or agree with who others think or say we are. There are particular behavioral expectations attached to various notions of coherence. Consequences often arise when our behavior does not match, or is "incoherent" with, our image in the eyes of others. For example, consider the "tough guy" image. If his friends consider him a tough guy he must, when confronted, behave accordingly. He may or may not share the same image of himself that his friends do of him. Thus, he may in a sense feel pressure to behave in a violent manner despite his feelings to the contrary.

We find that "Rhetoric, semiotics, deconstruction, and post-structuralism...draw attention to the role of language in the development of selves and identities" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 406). In particular, the work of many communication theorists whether through the rhetorical (Ogden & Richards, 1927), the metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), or the semiotic (Saussure, 1959), demonstrates how language is relational rather than merely referential (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 406). That is the way we speak, what we are allowed to say and to whom, and what others are allowed to say to and about us, have very real and material consequences for subjects such as allocation of and access to material resources.

Foucault articulates another notion of the human subject. Foucault's work on subjectivity based on the genealogy of discursive practices, situates subjects within systems of discourse. Accordingly, as we assume subject positions we are installed within a social order. This position, or role, allows us to make sense of our individual worlds yet at the same time subjects us to common discourses within it (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p.

406). However, Foucault's articulation of the subject, as acted upon by disciplinary discourse, leaves little to no room for other, more productive possibilities for subjects as interpersonal and individual crafters of speech (Anton & Peterson, 2003). That is, while Foucault was interested in the ways we "materialize" in discourse and how we are disciplined through regular ways of speaking, Anton & Peterson's use of subject positions tracks lines of argument that occur in face-to-face dialogue and thus, is predicated on individual agency.

Agency is closely tied to essentialism, coherence, and language and explores how we can or cannot have influence on ourselves and others while part of a social order that limits language and action (Anton & Peterson, 2003). Although agency may be largely determined by our various subject positions, this in no way eliminates our creative ability to choose between options. Thus, "choices result in individuality—the originality that differentiates people who share social identities" (Anton & Peterson, 2003, p. 407). Again, Anton and Peterson's articulation of subject positions is informed more by strategic, interpersonal discourse and interaction.

As previously stated, what lacks from many of the above theories of selfhood/subjectivity are both an embodied and moral component. The embodied turn to communicative research is important in that it dispels misplaced assumptions about individuals and communication. Based largely on empirical or "hard" sciences, early research in communication took people as preexisting objects that existed prior to communicative activity (Langsdorf, 1994). In this view communication is seen as merely representative and/or reflective of reality, and scholars within the discipline were charged with reporting accurately on the environment and the people within it. As with any other

system of power, social scientific discourse has a tendency to homogenize individuals into discursively constructed categories. Furthermore, the voice of the researcher was privileged over the particular individuals or culture under study. Culture is not value free and thus understanding underlying moral forces at work is vital to understanding particular, not abstract, cultural phenomena. An embodied turn to communicative research deals with meaning, and meaning is, at least in communicative engagement, "culturally specified, morally attuned, socially negotiated, and locally applied" (Langsdorf, 1994, p. 8).

This is not to suggest that speech is the only mode of valuation and meaning. As we will shortly see, the body has other intentional capacities for spatializing and temporalizing, i.e. manifesting *world* (Anton, 2002). However, when dealing with cultural texts we are inevitably dealing with symbolicity. This project thus seeks to articulate a position from which one can examine speech without reducing subjectivity to merely a product of discourse, while at the same time avoiding the reductionisms associated with a traditional modernist conception of self. What is needed are theoretical constructs that are phenomenologically grounded (i.e. address embodiment) and consider the moral forces behind phenomena and texts. It is here that authenticity can greatly contribute to rhetorical theorizing, and where a fresh articulation of selfhood can illuminate "the specifics of the situation: to analyzing the who, what, how, why, components as they function as interactive parts of the whole situation" (Langsdorf, 1994, p. 7).

To overcome the obstacles that arise within contradictory claims of selfhood I maintain that opposed to an "either/or" position, we must adopt a "both/and" conception

of selfhood. An "either/or" position suggests that *either* we are subjects interpolated by/through historical discourses *or* we are unified agents, originators of discourse and action. Conversely, a "both/and" position maintains that we are *both* embodied performers of speech *and* we are subjected to discursive patterns, which are historically given and institutionally enforced. Rhetorical critics must be able to identify hegemonic institutions and discourses without denying the creative/improvisational and situated subject. We must remember that discourse both enables and constrains (Burke, 1965). The "both/and" position to subjectivity is an empowering and praxis oriented approach that liberates individuals from institutionally given regimes of power.

However, this embodied and agentive subject does not exist without an amount of responsibility. In much contemporary theorizing responsibility for social oppression and marginalization is placed squarely on institutional apparatuses (e.g. government, university, economy, etc.). Although certain regimes of power do constrain and limit (discipline) people's actions, individuals are still endowed with uniquely situated experiences within which are found amalgamations of socio-cultural heritage and individually lived, *once-occurrent* experiences. To attempt to escape either is an eschewal of the responsibility inherent to human existence.

Authenticity Considered

At its most basic authenticity refers to the quest by people, particularly in Western culture, to pursue individually fulfilling and meaningful lives. From a young age we are prodded by parents, teachers, and other public figures, to *aspire to greatness*, *reach for the stars, find our true calling in life*, or some other variant. When in youth, our introductions to authenticity usually begin by *knowing what we want to be when we grow*

up. However, as we mature we likely become engaged in more meaningful life projects such as perhaps raising children, finding a life partner, and/or serving others within a larger group or organization. This is not to suggest that notions of life projects are new to contemporary culture but rather, that unique to modern culture is a calling or yearning to realize our own innate potentialities, and that we somehow fail ourselves and others by not pursuing a life that is distinctively of our own making. Thus, difficulties abound when attempting to speak on the concept of authenticity. Rebuked by some as a dangerous individualism yet lauded by others as the quintessential human right of self-fulfillment, an inarticulate debate shrouds authenticity from adequate deliberation (Taylor, 1991).

And so we find that arguments made by both "knockers" and "boosters" of authenticity are problematic (Taylor, 1991). The knockers charge that the culture of authenticity is merely a guise for unfettered narcissism/egoism. Far from a viable moral ideal, authenticity is merely an excuse for self-indulgence and pulls individuals away from larger, social concerns. However, according to Taylor these sweeping generalizations confound the culture of authenticity with other, more trivialized forms of self-indulgence. This concept of authenticity, mainstreamed largely through pop-psychological notions of self awareness and actualization, suggests that to be *true* to oneself often requires a turning inward. Outward social and familial commitments, according to this strand of thought, must play second fiddle to self-realization[2]. It requires one to center attention more frequently upon the self irrespective of others and thus, is no ideal at all.

Meanwhile the boosters, advocators of individual choice and freedom, celebrate individuals' powers of creation and artistic license in forging a self. Ironically, boosters

[2] *See*, Sheehy, G. (1976). *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life*. New York: Bantam

are unable to speak on their own position due to the "soft relativism" that underlies much of their reasoning, which according to Taylor goes something like this, "Everybody has his or her own 'values,' and about these it is impossible to argue" (1991, p. 13). Partially grounded in a belief of mutual respect, this line of thought also holds that society should remain neutral on questions concerning moral deliberation.

Ultimately, Taylor (1991) argues that both are slightly off the mark. While the boosters often fail to acknowledge responsibility to any outside calls or demands, the knockers fail to see that a constructive moral ideal is at work behind authenticity, despite its often debased and trivialized manifestations. In the former group emphasis is placed on individual choice and continual self-reflection, whereas the latter group places more emphasis on the communal (i.e. public) sphere.

While authenticity has largely decayed into its more base forms such as solipsism and/or narcissism, the notion of authenticity is not bankrupt and can still serve as an important moral ideal for living a significant and meaningfully engaged life. By "moral ideal", Taylor (1991) refers to an articulation of what might constitute a "better" or "higher" mode of being, "Where 'better' and 'higher' are defined not in terms of what we happen to desire or need, but offer a standard of what we ought to desire" (p. 16).

However, before this can occur we must be willing to accept three controversial tenets. The first is that authenticity is a legitimate ideal; the second is that one can argue for or against ideals and about the "conformity of practices to these ideals" (Taylor, 1991, p. 23). The third and final belief we must accept is that arguments made on behalf of authenticity can make a material difference. As Taylor states,

> "The first belief flies in the face of the major thrust of criticism of the culture of authenticity, the second involves rejecting subjectivism, and the third is incompatible with those accounts of modernity that see us as imprisoned in modern culture by the 'system,' whether this is defined as capitalism, industrial society, or bureaucracy" (Taylor, 1991, p. 23).

The above claims are particularly relevant to this project as they challenge both overly narcissistic manifestations of the modern self, as well as the flattened and trivial manifestations of the postmodern subject as conceived of by authors such as Derrida and Foucault. Again, narcissism arises when demands emanating from outside the self are cast off as oppressive and self-stultifying, whereas trivialization arises when the textual and/or discursive self supersedes openness to horizons of meaning and significance (Taylor, 1991). Furthermore, the postmodern subject advocates the amoralism of discursive creativity, while at the same time ignoring the dialogical background upon which it (discursive creativity) occurs. When this occurs we sever the ties that bind us to others.

Thus, as language is a uniquely a human experience, what is needed is a communicative grounding of the philosophical concept of authenticity. Again, because our culture is one that feels compelled to answer the call of authenticity we must be able to distinguish its more base manifestations (i.e. narcissism and trivialization) from its richer and more responsible forms. This will allow for a more accurate tracking of authenticity within rhetorical contexts. Central to the notion of authenticity is an embodied subject, moved by moral ideals and capable of acting upon her/his socio-political environments. Given the previously mentioned importance of an ethical

component to rhetorical scholarship, authenticity provides a much needed presence in communication research.

Again, we must not be misguided as to the nature of authenticity. That is, it does not mean that one simply "goes for their's" at the expense of other people. Authenticity refers to the fact that people are "perpetually outside of themselves, actively caught up attending to and caring for the things that matter to them... [Thus] "to achieve personal fulfillment [i.e. to live *authentically*], persons need not explicitly focus upon themselves, as if self were best taken care of in such a direct, literal manner...Self fulfillment need not specifically focus upon self per se" (Anton, 2001, p. 7).

If this indeed be the case, how are we to thoughtfully track and articulate how *selfhood* is constituted? Furthermore, if "authenticity, as a quest for self-fulfillment, requires or demands an adequate comprehension of the selfhood that is to be fulfilled" (p. 8), how are we to understand authenticity so that we might engage in more significant life projects thereby cultivating "higher and fuller modes of authenticity" (Taylor, 1991, p. 94)?

Using Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991/1992) as a point of departure, Corey Anton argues that a thematically developed articulation of self is central to an understanding of authenticity. In *Selfhood and Authenticity* (2001) he states that to responsibly articulate what it means to be human, we must acknowledge and respect four specific dimensions of the human self. The four dimensions needing elucidation are: embodiment, sociality, symbolicity, and temporality (2001, p. 9). I will explore these dimensions in more depth later, for now it is important to note that these four dimensions

are not mutually exclusive but rather, contiguous and interrelated "ontological conditions of the human self" (ibid).

Given the above Anton contends, and I believe rightfully so, that the notion of authenticity should be a fundamental concept to communication studies. Why need this concept become central to our field? Because, he writes, "Questions of selfhood (or embodiment, sociality, symbolicity, and temporality) are uniquely communicational issues" (2001, p. 11). What is at the core of these issues is a fuller and deeper investigation into human logos itself. Anton goes on to state that logos has come to be merely synonymous with "reason". However, the term originally held far more varied and significant meanings such as "speech, language, logic, thought, discourse, and reasoned argument" (ibid). It is in Plato, and later in Aristotle, where we see the term used frequently in the former, more technical and specialized sense. This is not to say that neither Plato nor Aristotle understood logos in its more complex and rich character, but rather that *we* have largely come to understand the term through this narrow conception.

We can trace the latter understanding of the term to the Stoics who, using Heraclitus as a point of departure, conceived of logos as an "all-pervasive formula of organization" (Peters, 1967). Here logos is divine. It is the active and ubiquitous presence/force in the universe (pp. 110-112). Thus, as Aristotle's original formula suggests, we are "animal[s] possessing logos" (Taylor, 1985, in Anton, 2001, p. 11). It is this richness of what it means to be a human self that goes largely unaddressed in a vast amount of social scientific research. "Whether someone's focus is upon textuality, or sociality, or perhaps even communication patterns, the profound depth of the meaning of logos [thus, selfhood] seems lost in contemporary culture" (Anton, 2001, p. 11). When

this occurs we leave ourselves vulnerable to systemic and institutional discourses that often lead to more base forms of authenticity such as individualism, worldly disenchantment, and dangerous obedience to instrumental reason. These three "malaises of the modern age", as Taylor refers to them, greatly detract from human meaning, compassion, and social responsibility (Taylor, 1991).

Phenomenological Notions of Selfhood

Objective/empirical accounts of reality tell us we live in a world of things. Within these accounts we may come to understand that we (as physical bodies) are merely part of this world of things. That is, there are things in the world, (e.g. trees, cars, houses, roads, etc.), and human bodies are another thing among them. Furthermore, we generally experience space and time as containers, "in which both world and bodies are found" (Anton, 2002, p. 187). An alternative account of reality, a subjective or relativistic account, suggests that reality is merely representations or projections of an individual subject's psyche.

A phenomenological account of the body challenges this either/or position through a concept known as intentionality (Heidegger, 1962; Anton, 2001; 2002). Most generally, intentionality refers to our bodily capacities for transcending and revealing the world, the human world (Anton, 2002, p. 187). Intentionality suggests that both subjects and objects are innate to existence. They are simultaneously arising correlates of one another (Anton, 2001, p. 26). Said otherwise, to exist is to "be-by-things" (Heidegger, 1962) and our body's sensory capacities (intentional powers) are what allow "being-by-things". "If I am awake, 'the there', a concrete situation is disclosed 'along with' the here

of my body, even if this fact remains largely tacit". Thus, I, for-myself, am never merely and exclusively confined to the here of my body's physical boundaries (i.e., the skin); I am always already "being-by" interworldly entities" (Anton, 2002, p. 186).

Relevant here are notions of "thetic" and "pre-thetic" intentionality. These terms, also addressed as reflective/pre-reflective (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), suggest that our intentional capacities are often transparent as we are caught up in that which is revealed through our act of intending. For example, when writing this paper I am caught in the meanings of the words appearing on the screen before me, the meanings they convey in the work. When fully engrossed I do not directly attend to the computer screen they appear on, or to the keyboard I use to type them. There is not me and also the computer. There is a "focal disappearance" (Leder, 1990) or "co-comportment" (Anton, 2002) through which my work is revealed.

Therefore, "the operations of our intentional powers recess from explicit awareness as we, thereby, concern ourselves with what they make room for" (Anton, 2002, p. 189). Our senses are all actively engaged and integrated as they continuously intercommunicate and support one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Leder, 1990; Anton, 2002). Depending on the activity, one sense may be more dominant than others. However, when standing in close proximity to a water fall, the sound of crashing water still accompanies and supports both the sight of the falls before me as well as the cool, damp mist that wets my face. Likewise, as I will shortly demonstrate, through accustoming ourselves to any technology a similar disappearance occurs through a technological motility.

Another area that needs attention, if we are to truly appreciate the profundity of authenticity, is the impact of our technological environments on the human self. If symbolicity/sonorousness [use of language] is a natural dimension of selfhood, and as the modes and mediums of communication change, does the nature of selfhood change with them? How so? It stands to reason that if the self is embodied, social, symbolic, and temporal, then reconfigurations to any of these dimensions result in significant changes to the constitution of a human self. As one strand of the self is altered via communicative technology, the entire web feels its effects. It is therefore possible to surmise the impact a particular medium has on the social dimension through examining its effects on the embodied, symbolic, and temporal self.

Sociality and the Technological Self

Given the embodied dimension of selfhood already articulated, the following section discusses how the social dimension of self is impacted through the use of disembodied forms of communication. It is argued, similar to other claims on the issue, that others appear *present* through voice and thus, primarily through embodied face-to-face engagement. Conversely, many view communication through the lens of the transmission model. This model assumes that human interaction is comprised of little more than senders, receivers, and information. When conceptualized in these terms it is easy to understand how one might conclude that disembodied forms of communication, such as CMC, cell phones, etc, are simply the next steps in the evolution of human communication. At the very least, there are few working with and/or studying communicative technologies that believe these technologies are neutral. Vint Cerf, the so-called "Father of the Internet" for his work as the co-designer of the basic protocols that

power modern computer networks and current vice president of Google asserts unequivocally, "There is no question in my mind that new technologies developed in the areas of networking and personal computing have absolutely changed the way we communicate" (Ewalt, 2005). Likewise, Henry Jenkins, the director of the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT states very directly that, "Digital technology has changed the speed and scale of human communication" (Jenkins, 2005). Due to the prevalence and perhaps commonsense nature of the transmission model, most believe these technologies to be a boon for society. Again, if human communication is simply a tool used to send and receive information, than any technology that can improve the speed, distance, and clarity of information is highly advantageous.

I later challenge the above assumptions by elucidating various biases that are inherent to the use of certain communicative technologies. These biases, such as those readily found within CMC, ultimately cut access to the most important aspect of social engagement, which is aural and embodied contact. This often results in more narrow conceptions of the human self where both self and others are trivialized and objectified.

Sociality and the Senses

Alternatively, Ong (1967) argued that voice conveys the presence of persons and suggests that to understand presence we must turn our attention to the phenomenological differences between sight and hearing (Anton, 2006). In line with the embodied dimension of selfhood, an account of the spatial and temporal differences between sight and sound is an important step towards the understanding of presence. As a result of our culture's visual bias and as related to the written and electric words we begin with sight.

Sight's spatial orientation is predicated on particular perspectives or points of view, each perspective exclusively revealed through intervening spaces between them as well as between them and me. As I look to my visual expanse I see objects laid out in an enduring horizon of demarcated colors and boundaries. Furthermore, sight is both a "directional and directed" sense (Anton, 2002, p. 191). If we wish to see something we face or turn towards it. If we do not wish to see something we turn away or simply close our eyes.

Hearing differs in its spatial orientations. "Sounds spatialize by surrounding us and impressing upon us with a kind of inescapability. They fill, infuse, and embrace a room in such a way that they cannot be possessed exclusively...It is the most communal of the senses" (Anton, 2002; Ong, 1967; McLuhan, 1964). Once we have heard something we cannot *un*-hear it. A computer lab full of people may possess several different views. My possibilities include (among others) the windows through which I see the adjoining lab and other students. Conversely, if I rotate 180 degrees I have among my visual possibilities a hallway leading to the exit. Again, each of us has our own unique visual point of reference. Although we do not necessarily share the same visual expanse, we all share in common the sounds permeating and filling the room. We all hear the chattering of the same voices, the rustling of paper, and the *honk* of the nose just blown. Although we each may focus on different voices, we cannot shut out the sound of the other people in different parts of the room nor the clicking of the keyboards and other noises. Try as I might, I am unable to block out the loud voices saturating my acoustical surround. Even though I attend to my paper, sounds wash-over and demand my attention. "Hearing, therefore, opens persons and the world as other senses cannot; it finely

registers the living present…it tightly attunes us to the event-character, the living/dying actuality, of existence" (Anton, 2005, p. 7).

Again, sound differs in that it separates from its source, and often competes with other sounds in our audible surround. Sounds are not "over against me" (Anton, 2001) in some acoustical expanse. Distances between the source and my ears can remain undisclosed as we experience hearing as immediate. If in the distance, sound's original point of origin is often non-apparent and we are left only with a general direction.

Sight and sound also differ in their temporal capacities. Sight ushers in experiences of simultaneity and permanence. I can view the computer monitor before me as a complete and continuous object, which remains unchanged. As I walk, things in the distance are given simultaneously as whole objects. Sounds are never given as such simultaneous wholes. They are "fleeting and transient" by nature therefore, the beginning and end are separate (Anton, 2002). Sounds come into being and pass away whereas sights are given as constants. Moreover, sounds grab and take hold of us in the now while sights (as over against us) open us up to the future. Vision discloses objects as distinct points and possibilities of traversed distances. Both the objects themselves and the time needed to reach them are *ahead* of me.

As the above characteristics demonstrate, notions of presence are complicated through our insistence on reducing all of reality to the clearly visible (Anton, 2006). This shift in sensory bias occurred in no small part due to the shift in communicative technologies. Beginning with the alphabet and increasingly so with the printing press, as McLuhan (1964) and others have shown, Western consciousness has undergone escalating partiality towards its visual sensibilities. Furthermore, the ascension of the

hard sciences, with its attention on visual measurement, articulated a universe of extended objects that is wholly visible (Ong, 1967). Ong found a key problem with this view in that, "Sight registers surfaces, which means that of itself it encourages one to consider even persons not as interiors but from the outside (i.e. visually). Thus persons, too, tend to be thought of somehow as objects" (Ong, 1967, p. 228). This dehumanizes the other through a sort of instrumental association. Again, this is largely the result of corresponding communicative technologies. Sight ushers in a sort of objectivity of the other that is not possible with sound. Said otherwise, our visually biased culture is a direct result of the spatial and temporal configuration of sight.

This may well be the reason for advocates of CMC to largely ignore issues of embodiment, aural presence, and interiority. Again, as embodied we are spatially and temporally oriented according to our various intentional powers. Although fully integrated each sense reveals different aspects of world and others. The next section takes a closer look at how various communicative technologies sever, enhance, or otherwise alter our experiences of others. The technologies we choose to communicate with/through reconfigure more than just the range and scale of our communicative engagements; they alter our very orientations toward *world*. A closer look at various stages in the development of communicative technology, as well as the sensory biases they introduce, will serve to widen our understanding of these issues.

Technological Extensions

Like Ong (1967) and other members of the *Toronto School*, McLuhan (1964) is invaluable to the study of embodiment in relation to communicative technologies. For example, exploring some of the psychological and social effects that differentiate oral

and literate cultures, he argues that the shift from orality to literacy was marked by a shift from an aural/oral society to an intensely visual one. Said otherwise, large-scale societal changes take place when shifts in sensory configurations occur through the integration of new communicative technologies.

McLuhan believed the first major technological innovation to be the phonetic alphabet (1964). Prior to its inception humans lived in a world of sensory balance and simultaneity. Our audible disposition created and was essential to "tribal kinship" and interdependence. The spoken word, as aurally configured, is far more involving and participatory by nature; far more *cool* than its *hot* successor the written word. "A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in "high definition" (larger amounts of data). "Hot media (written words, photographs, radio, etc.) are low in participation, and cold media (spoken word, television, internet, etc.) are high in participation or completion by the audience" (McLuhan, 1964).

Members of the tribe existed harmoniously because, "the primary medium of communication was speech, and thus no man knew appreciably more or less than any other—which meant that there was little individualism and specialization, the hallmarks of "civilized" Western man" (McLuhan, 1969)[3]. Even today certain tribes are incapable of comprehending any notions of an individual, or of a "separate and independent citizen" (ibid). Furthermore, as presence is revealed through voice and the sole means of communication for tribal wo/man was the spoken word, the world and others took on a far more magical existence. People were perpetually engaged within communal interaction. The 'magic' of the spoken word is often lost on today's culture, which prizes speed, ease, and volume of information/communication. Once the phonetic alphabet was

[3] In "The Playboy Interview: *Marshall McLuhan*" interview by Eric Nordon (1969).

firmly entrenched, giving dominance to sight, the inclusive and communal web of tribal wo/man all but disintegrated.

The culmination of alphabetic literacy, the printing press, ushered in an unprecedented age of fragmentation and individualization. Unlike earlier logographic writings, which served primarily as mnemonic functions (debts, religious or communal obligations, etc.), the phonetic alphabet severed the eye (vision) from the interplay of the other senses. Phonetic script was a strictly visual representation of the natural sounds of speech. Said differently, written words were visual commands for specific sounds. Likewise, Ong writes, "A picture, say, of a bird does not reduce sound to space, for it represents an object, not a word...the alphabet...represents sound itself as a thing, transforming the evanescent world of sound to the quiescent, quasi-permanent world of space" (2002). Likewise, McLuhan contended that the phonetic alphabet isolated our visual faculty from our other senses and thus, disrupted sensory balance. This impacted the social harmony of pre-literate wo/man (in Nordon, 1969). Again, the temporal and spatial capacities of tribal wo/man, as audibly installed, were drastically different from those of their visually dominant heirs.

"Psychically the printed book, an extension of the visual faculty, intensified perspective and the fixed point of view...Socially, the typographic extension of man brought in nationalism, industrialism, mass markets, and universal literacy and education" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 157). The above serves as yet another example of the similarities between McLuhan's work and phenomenological accounts of embodiment. Regarding its capacities of worldly disclosure, print was essentially our fall into Newtonian and Euclidean time and space. Both were experienced as containers, which

most still believe we are "in". This is akin to what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to as a *container* metaphor, and greatly contributes to our experiences of both self and others as self-contained and separate. Again, literate man was fragmented, linear, and sequential. This further contributed to the notion of causality, events as sequential processes that mirrored linear, fragmented, and sequential type. And again, persons were now primarily experienced as exteriorized objects in space. The effects of the printing press held sway until the invention of the telegraph. In his interview with *Playboy Magazine* McLuhan tells us, "The age of print had its obituary tapped out by the telegraph, the first of the new electric media, and further obsequies were registered by the perception of "curved space" and non-Euclidean mathematics...which revived tribal man's discontinuous time-space concepts" (1969). The instantaneous speed of electric technology created an enormous vacuum or implosion of our intentional powers. Consciousness was again situated within the *now* of time and space.

Electric mediums such as the radio, television, cellular technology, and the Internet, offer the possibility of experiencing distant people and locations in "real-time". McLuhan suggested that people could no longer sit back and calmly ruminate on events of the world. Only electricity's visually dominate predecessors enabled such detachment. This had a tremendous impact on cultural relations. "As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 20). However, he understood that this contraction of time and space also came with a price. He realized that individuals, when brought into such close proximity, had the potential for large scale or individual violence. This was

due to the loss of identity that occurs whenever people are homogenized, and this homogenization is a direct result of electric mediums contracting social and cultural environments.

As previously argued, this contraction occurs through spatial and temporal reconfigurations to our bodily senses, i.e., intensifications and/or alterations to our sensory fields. Perhaps this is a large part of the attraction of disembodied forms of communication. As we are increasingly threatened by homogenization and identity loss, we are equally attracted to forms of social interaction that allow for finely nuanced crafting of self and "spelled out" perceptions of others.

The irony of this position is that the resources we have at our disposal for crafting our online personas are largely funded by objectified and homogenized cultural standards. That is, managing one's face (Goffman, 1967) in face-to-face interaction is accomplished more through situational, ritualized, and embodied cues/contexts, whereas when online one's face is, in a sense, already and literally *spelled* out. For example, when I go to a website to chat with others I enter a space where general parameters are already clearly defined. I am "Liberal", "over 20", "Caucasian", "graduate student", "looking for love", "looking for friendship", etc. As chapter three will later demonstrate, to exist online is to be interpolated by the discourse and URL of the webpage one communicates on/through. The lack of physical presence allows users of various communicative technologies to control self-identity as perceived by the other and oftentimes equally anonymous user.

We must remember that this ability to objectify, to visualize, and quantify words/language is the historical result of the rise of alphabetic script, and furthered by

print technology. If we continue to ignore this, we run the risk of making careless assumptions regarding the nature of both selfhood and language.

The following chapter builds upon the previous insights on the relationship between the body and communicative technologies, and discusses the therapeutic. Here I demonstrate the previously mentioned functions of various escapisms, which are offered to consumers in the form of an endless array of gadgets. These escapisms are therapeutic in that they offer symbolic consolation in place of material compensation for various societal afflictions including, increased workweeks, class disparities, and rampant consumerism. A brief overview of the rhetoric of therapy will provide a base from which to proceed.

Therapy, Possession, and Entertainment

The notion of therapeutic rhetoric was developed and advanced by scholars who believe that very material social injustices such as poverty, downsizing, racism, sex and gender inequalities, etc, are dealt with in "personalized" and "privatized" ways. Cloud (1998) demonstrates how therapeutic buzzwords such as personal responsibility, recovery, adapting, etc, turn economic uncertainty and cutthroat capitalist tactics into "personal 'grief, anger, and depression' that are, as this rhetoric suggests, natural psychological phenomena" rather than institutionally sanctioned decisions and actions. Akin to *rolling with the punches*, this bootstrap mentality disciplines with notions of systemic inevitability and puts the onus of failure on individual shortcomings. Thus, individuals are consoled and offered advice on how to best cope with the impinging distress he or she is likely to continue facing.

In related work, White's (1992) work in critical media studies highlights how television conditions citizens to turn inward through a confessional brand of programming. Thus, "material prizes and personal advice are sought and won by those who demonstrate a willingness to confess on camera, in public. Self-identity and social recognition within familial and consumer networks hinge on participation in the process of mediated confession" (White, 1992, p. 8). Guilt and its corresponding expiation perpetuate the confessional and consumptive cycle.

The following chapter then, explores how technology is presented as therapy - as the personal corrective for problems more appropriately conceived of as social. I argue that the therapeutic value of technology manifests itself in three variant, yet consistently prevalent forms of *escapism*. The first manifestation is escape from clutter and

complexity through increasing integration and ease of use. Second, various technologies are offered as an escape from the confining strictures of modern-day life, including the family, the din of the community, and the strict confines of the office. Finally, it will be demonstrated how entertainment is sold as an escape from *everything*. That is, entertainment is offered via gadgets as an individual means of escape, ultimately contributing to withdrawal from communal participation and interaction. Through the possession of various technologies and despite external social conditions, personalized and mobile entertainment is made available *24/7*. Thus, technologies provide individuals symbolic sustenance in times of strife.

Any attempt at challenging this symbolic sustenance is met with cynicism and anger. Rockler (2003) highlights a related trend of strong public aversion to critically questioning cultural texts that are purportedly for entertainment purposes only. She states that, "The dismissal of the notion that popular culture reflects systemic inequalities functions as a barrier to discuss the very existence of these inequalities. Thus, therapeutic rhetoric hegemonically fosters order as it subdues systemic cultural criticism" (Rockler, 2003, p. 112). The following are but representative of therapeutically *escapist* ideologies, which suggest that the problems one needs to escape from are individual nuisances rather than widespread social struggles. Together, we can identify them as cultural premiums placed on possessing the latest gadgetry. As cultural norms these become highly effective modes of discipline through their surreptitious and seemingly innocuous nature.

Streamlined Integration as "Escape"

As previously stated, the first manifestation of escapism is constructed as a means of freeing individuals from clutter and complexity. Advertisers offer products that

are sleek, stylish, and compact, while simultaneously providing consumers a bundle of both products and services. Instead of taking my laptop, ipod, book, magazine, cell phone, etc, on a trip, I merely take my *Blackberry* or *MDA* (Mobile Digital Assistant). Furthermore, I need not worry about the *awkwardness* and limitations of chords and multiple devices. Everything is provided in a single gadget that is compactly integrated and wireless.

In addition to the compact and integrated aspects of technologies that free individuals from clutter, consumers are also offered a wide range of services, which are available at the push of a button. Thus, individuals need no longer be troubled by searching a multitude of sources for desired information or products. Not only can I send and receive email, but I can also locate the "hot-spot happenings", access "first-look shopping nights", and learn about "must-have gear, gadgets, and fashion trend reports" from *GQ* and its partner advertisers (GQ, 2006).

Rather than addressing our cultural obsession with technological progress (via the next *hot* gadget) and rampant consumerism, our attention is persistently focused upon the ways in which these various communicative technologies can ease the burdens of inconvenience. However, what this covers over is the shift of emphasis that occurs from rich, communicative engagement, to incessant and increasingly trite interaction. Relevant here is Mumford (1967) and his discussion of the "megatechnic." According to Mumford, megatechnics describe the trend of modern technologies in which emphasis is placed on constant production and replacement, rather than durability and efficiency. Hence the lure of advertisers who encourage unmitigated consumption based primarily on both

superficial changes in fashion and increased integration and mobility. The latest gadget is not only more desirable, but better (i.e. smaller, more durable, etc).

Technological discourse tells us that we need increasingly integrated and mobile products to cut down on complexity, however, conceals the fact that it is precisely because of our patterns of consumption and obsession with the latest gadgets that our lives become cluttered and complex in the first place. According to the logic of advertisers, rather than curbing our consumption habits and questioning the purpose of superficial product redesigns and integrations, we need only purchase the latest redesigned product.

Complicating matters, we find that the therapeutic rhetoric of progress and escape begins at an increasingly earlier age, as children are increasingly becoming targets of many advertisers. One wireless market analyst notes that the percentage of thirteen to seventeen year olds who owned cell phones rose from five percent in 2000 to fifty-six percent in 2004 (Sullivan, 2004). According to Sullivan, "Teens aren't just using their phones to talk. From rapid-fire "texting" to full-fledged Web browsing to videos and video games, cell phones have become portable computers. And that's opened up a whole new set of concerns" (Sullivan, 2004).

There is a growing synergy that appropriates an increasing integration of technology with other cultural products such as fashion, celebrity news, music, etc. As demonstrated by the above ads, cellular phones are now capable of receiving live video feeds, television broadcasts, and are able to download music as well as other information such as blogs, email, etc. Thus, the fact that as of 2004 over sixty-eight percent of Americans owned a cell phone (Pew Research Center, 2004), combined with digital

technology's increasingly integrated consumer pool, we see a perpetuation of our culture's proclivity for inauthentic (i.e. trivial) consumption. I return to the notion and origin of consumption later.

As these hip, integrated technologies increasingly become the primary means of communication for both teens and adults alike, we also sacrifice communication quality for quantity. Advertisers tell us that the norm is endless and instantaneous communication. That is, we have come to believe that the ability to communicate with anyone, anytime, and anywhere, somehow results in improved communicative environments. However, rather than opening up the public sphere these technologies have enclosed individuals in on themselves. Senses of community, both global and domestic, and family, have greatly diminished. Again, rather than addressing this directly we are offered individual, personalized solutions in the form of technological gadgets. However, this is not the only form of escapism offered through technology.

Escape from Modern Life

A second form of escapism encourages us to break free from the confines of modern life such as the home, workplace, and the din of the city. One particular ad, geared more towards the professional, is for the *T-Mobile MDA* (Mobile Digital Assistant). This two-page ad features a young and fit male at the bottom of a steep grassy hill, who has taken a rest from his mountain biking to check his *MDA*. As the caption below the product indicates, possession of this product he has access to *DESKTOP POWER ON THE GO.* This allows him to, "take care of work and life" with a cellular phone that also provides, "access to your email, as well as the ability to send and receive

video, pictures, and large attachments." All made possible through *T-Mobile's* "powerful, nationwide data network."

Similarly, a product that combines business savvy with personal style, is the *BlackBerry*. This product allows its user to "take care of business and look good doing it" (Newsweek, 2006). For a *mere* three-hundred dollars and with a "superior voice and data experience in a sleeker, more stylish form", one is again put in charge of their seamlessly integrated private and work life. Break free from the office, so the ads suggest. Continue, however, to be productive whether at home, on the bike trail, or by the pool. Accompanying all the bells and whistles of these gadgets is, more importantly, mobility. This is typical of an increasingly disciplinary tactic, which occurs through the interjection of the workplace in all areas of our lives, even as the *MDA* demonstrates, on a recreational bike ride. We are disciplined through notions of "around the clock" productivity. Through possessing these technologies we assume we are freeing ourselves from the confines of our places of work. However, now we are merely expected to bring our work home with us. The corporate leash is becoming ever shorter. However, through the allure and obedience that progress brings, via the latest technologies, we are hard-pressed to resist the sirens call. Thus, these ads are therapeutic as they ignore the systemic problems that increasingly keep us indoors in the first place, e.g. increasing workweeks, decreasing vacations, downsizing, low wages, etc. Again, as opposed to material compensation, symbolic consolation is offered in the form of the aforementioned avenues of escape (i.e. the possession of more gadgets).

For example, despite being the wealthiest nation in the world, the U.S. has the widest gap between the rich and the poor of any industrialized nation (Shah, 2006).

Furthermore, downsizing and longer workweeks are continual sources of stress. A recent Gallup poll found that forty-three percent of respondents had no plans to take a vacation. "Twenty-five percent of workers in the private sector receive no paid vacation, and those who do but don't take it save their employers, according to one estimate, $21 billion a year" (The Fresno Bee, 2006). According to the poll, most Americans simply do not want to fall behind with their already hectic workload. Coinciding with the therapeutic function of mobility, "74%...said they keep in touch by laptop or cell phone while on vacation" (The Fresno Bee, 2006). Additionally, the long weekend has replaced the more traditional two-three week vacation.

Therapeutically, these gadgets provide us a means of self-management, a taking control of our own lives and an escape from unpredictability, an escape that requires no outside intervention. Said otherwise, we are rewarded through the ability to take the reins of both our personal and work lives. However, our culture's obsession with progress, convenience, and ease/speed of communication, covers over the many ways in which authentic human communication has suffered at the hands of these debased, therapeutic modes of communicating via cellular and internet technologies. Furthermore, therapeutic discourse turns larger social and political issues such as unequal distribution of wealth, over-consumption, and downsizing, into individual means of coping with the systemic hardships resulting from unethical corporate and political practices.

Despite the prevalence of the two preceding forms of escapism, a third and perhaps more powerful form of escapism is inherent within the ideology of entertainment. The next section explores how we are offered the ability to *escape it all* through personalized, individualized entertainment.

Entertainment as Consolation

In a chapter from his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neal Postman (1985) talks of the difference between a technology and a medium. The former is a physical apparatus while the latter is the appropriation an individual or society makes of the apparatus/machine. That is, "A technology becomes a medium as it employs a particular symbolic code, as it finds its place in a particular social setting, as it insinuates itself into economic and political contexts" (Postman, 1985, p. 84). Through this important distinction Postman offers an insightful look into the impact that television has on society. He argues that it is not simply that television is entertaining and thus dulls the viewer's mind, but rather that television has made entertainment the lens through which the world is experienced. Said otherwise,

"Entertainment is the supra-ideology of all discourse on television. No matter what is depicted or from what point of view, the overarching presumption is that it is there for our amusement and pleasure. That is why even on news shows which provide us daily with fragments of tragedy and barbarism, we are urged by the newscasters to 'join them tomorrow'...We accept the newscasters' invitation because we know that the 'news' is not to be taken seriously, that it is all in fun, so to say" (Postman, 1985, p. 87).

According to Postman (1985) everything from the attractiveness of the news anchors (and guests with make-up, lighting, etc), the musical scores, the attractive commercials, etc, all convey an entertaining experience. Despite appearing over twenty years ago, these insights take on even more precision when applied to contemporary digital technologies. As more of these services and technologies are integrated, and the mobility, compactness, and prices continue to improve for the consumer, the societal

expectation for entertainment is only increasing. A higher premium is placed on entertainment. Thus, on the pop-cultural level data technology is largely a medium for consumption of trivial information and other products offered in a *must-have* package. Information, it seems, is only as valuable as it is entertaining. As previously demonstrated, we told that to be hip, normal, and desirable, is to be entertained 24/7.

We can trace the selling of entertainment directly to the consumer boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Robbins (2001), consumerism arose directly out of a crisis in production. Although new technologies resulted in a higher production of goods and services, there was a shortage of people who could actually afford to buy them. Robbins states, "Since production is such an essential part of the culture of capitalism, society quickly adapted to the crisis by convincing people to buy things, by altering basic institutions and even generating a new ideology of pleasure" (2001). It is this "new ideology of pleasure" that Postman (1985) referred to regarding television, and that I argue is the predominant motif found in communicative technologies.

One particular ad packaging entertainment in technology is from *GQ Mobile*. Similar to other companies, *GQ* offers subscription services to their information through an individual's cell phone. Emanating from the phone in the ad are block arrows that point to the various categories of information individuals access to when subscribed to the service. The four main categories are "VIP events", "shop first", "the goods", and "what's in". Among other nuggets of information the first category informs us of *hot-spot happenings*, while the second category provides one with *first-look shopping nights, private sales, and giveaways*. Similarly, the third category encourages consumer

participation and rewards us with *text-to-win sweepstakes, contests, and games*. The fourth category in this particular ad is perhaps its most conspicuous and informs one of *must-have gear, gadgets, grooming, fashion, and trend reports from our* [GQ's] *advertisers* (GQ, 2006).

The above categories all serve as invitations to originality through personalized entertainment. Again, we find that historically, "The goal of the advertisers was to aggressively shape consumer desires and create value in commodities by imbuing them with the power to transform the consumer into a more desirable person" (Robbins, 2001). Despite receiving the same core information as millions of others, through the possession of *my* cell phone and subscription to GQ Mobile, I can personal *my* entertainment experience by deciding when to access which particular subscription services. The illusion is a sense of individuality when in fact the same trite information is repackaged and regurgitated, only perhaps through different mediums (i.e. cell phones, laptops, ipods, etc.).

I argue that this is increasingly so with the digital packaging of information and entertainment. Due to the increasing ubiquity of communicative technology and the instantaneousness of access to both information and entertainment (or information *as* entertainment), product differentiation has become increasingly important. Given the rapidity of technological growth and the subsequent price drops and availability, the importance of individualized ringtones, wallpapers, and product features, becomes increasingly important. Fashion becomes important in that it encourages the "stirring up of anxieties and restlessness over the possession of things that were not 'new' or 'up-to-

date'. Fashion pressured people to buy not out of need but for style — from a desire to conform to what others defined as 'fashionable.'" (Robbins, 2001, p. 16).

Many of the products exclusively push entertainment as fashionable, and depict a clear link to desirability through the norm of possession. One such campaign is for the *V CAST* service. *V CAST* is a pay service provided by *Verizon Wireless* that allows individuals to download music directly onto his or her cell phone. One ad for this service features a contemporary *Dancehall* artist named Sean Paul who, with cell phone in hand and sandwiched between two sexily clad females, stares unabashedly out at the viewer. The female to his left relaxes under one arm and stares desirably at a fashionably dressed Sean Paul, while the female to the right snuggles closely with both arms wrapped around him. While the females appear enamored with him, he appears nonchalant if not slightly disinterested in his company, seemingly *par for the course* for him. Below the picture the ad asks, "How does Sean Paul call his music?" To which it answers, "Just like you." The clear association between celebrity status, desirability, and entertainment is prominently featured once again. The therapeutic aspect of this particular ad lies in its drawing direct links between celebrity status, entertainment, and consumers. Again, the consumer's attention is turned back upon his or her self to how he or she might be desirable and entertained through simply purchasing this product.

Gaming is another, more obvious, form of entertainment that is integrated with cellular technologies. This is due to the wide popularity and success that the home gaming industry enjoys. According to a recent study thirty-three percent of surveyed adults admitted to spending ten hours or more per week playing video games, compared to only eleven percent of teens (Consumer Electronic Association, 2006). The study also

cited that over ten-billion dollars a year are spent on gaming technology. Sony's *Play Station Two* currently sells for one hundred and fifty dollars and Microsoft's *Xbox 360* "puts *you* at the center of your entertainment experience" for between a three hundred dollar core system, all the way up to seven hundred and fifty-nine dollars for the pro bundle with *bonus faceplate*[4]. The games for both systems priced between twenty dollars for less popular games up to sixty dollars for newer releases. Sony's *Play Station 3* is set to hit the shelves in November, 2006 and it is anticipated that over nineteen-million consoles will be sold in just the first year, generating an estimated eight-billion dollars in revenue (Consumer Electronic Association, 2006).

In short, the therapeutic trend of individually personalized entertainment, along with the allure of *being in the know* thus, *desirable*, all discipline through various escapisms, conveyed through the norm of possession. That is, we are goaded by normalizing discourses of progress, desirability, and entertainment, into continuously purchasing and needlessly upgrading these individualistic and often unnecessary technologies. The alternative of course is to be *out of the loop, undesirable,* and/or *bored.* This implies a lack of desirability, which makes one an outcast in American culture. One must inquire as to how it is possible to attain originality and authenticity in a culture that mass-produces (i.e. commodifies) every imaginable product, including entertainment. This demonstrates that what individuals are truly seeking is not uniqueness but rather, similarity. The appearance of standing-out is desirable as long as it remains in appearance only. As the earlier analyses demonstrate, cell phones are also increasingly trite forms of entertainment. One understands an argument for cell phone use centered on safety and

[4] Prices were gathered from http://www.walmart.com/search/browse-ng.do?ics=20&ico=0&ref=125866.183467+500524.4293873225. Prices are accurate as of March 29th, 2006.

accessibility. However, it is difficult to imagine how wireless connectivity and the ability to download *ringtones* and wallpaper, or take pictures, increases safety *or* accessibility. Yet the popularity and ubiquity of these technologies once again demonstrates the therapeutic power of technology as entertainment.

More importantly however, is the incessant push of around-the-clock entertainment. As previously argued, this form of escapism is therapeutic as it encourages a focus on means and modes of individualized entertainment, rather than questioning the consequences of unmitigated technological advance and over-consumption. Although many individuals are hard pressed to find steady employment, decent wages, and equal access to resources, *Microsoft*, *T Mobile*, *GQ*, *Verizon*, *Sprint*, etc, allow us to be "at the center of [our] entertainment experience". The above comment suggests a sort of empathy while simultaneously neglecting the systemic sources of poverty and inauthentic lifestyles. The logic seems to imply, "We know times are tough and that the future is uncertain however, you are still entitled to be comforted and entertained." Despite the fact that mega corporations all benefit from this form of therapy, they still express to have the consumers interests at heart. Both advertising and the products themselves discipline through the norm of possession and individualized, therapeutic escapisms. Entertainment itself has become increasingly integrated within these products to meet consumers' expectations to be entertained. Both cultural savvy and personal entertainment are bundled in a sheik and mobile package.

The Disciplining of Technological Rhetoric

A common thread throughout this work is the acknowledgment of a fundamental embodied nature of the self. The following chapter combines insights on the embodied and indigenous nature of speech to selfhood, authenticity, and Foucault's scholarship on the disciplining function of discourse. Through an examination of the social networking site known as *Facebook*, I argue that the self is disciplined through both the normalizing judgment and ultimately, through the gaze. As users of the website give themselves over to their profiles they are subjected to objectified and normalized standards. We can help circumvent this objectification by better understanding the embodied nature of self.

Although seemingly at odds with one another Anton's treatment of symbolicity, what he refers to as sonorousness via Merleau-Ponty (1968), and Foucault's notion of discourse may fruitfully coexist. Again, the major reconciliation that needs to occur resides in distinctions of subjectivity. As mentioned at the outset of this project Anton argues for an embodied subject, one that is capable of individual choice and discursive agency, whereas Foucault argues that subjects materialize in historically rooted patterns of discourse.

To alleviate the tensions that exist between the two dominate notions of subjectivity, I argue that embodiment should take a central role in future rhetorical theorizing. While Foucault insightfully elucidates the disciplining function of historically rooted discourse, he strips his subject of his or her ability to alter discursive patterns through individual speech practices. The notion of sonorousness as an innate and embodied intentional power places much more resistant and creative potential within the hands of subjects. Moreover, it cuts against individualist assumptions regarding the

nature and relation of selfhood to *world*. Before critically assessing the rhetoric of certain technological prophets, a more detailed explication of the embodied aspect of sonorousness is in order.

Sonorousness and Selfhood

Commenting on the "linguistic turn" to social theorizing within the latter parts of the twentieth century, Anton (2001) highlights two major and generally opposing camps. The first group tends to "understate the indigenous fecundity of speech" (Anton, 2001, p. 85). The second group consists of those authors who in one way or another exaggerate speech's powers and role in shaping both subjects and society (ibid).

Echoing Stewart (1995, 1996), Anton argues that those who would understate the role of language subscribe to what is referred to as the "symbol model" of communication. Language is conceived here solely as a semiotic system, a system of signs and/or symbols (Stewart, 1996). According to this model, language is merely a tool used for representing both a preexisting world and self. This is what Stewart (1996) refers to as the two-world hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that we live in both a symbolic and non-symbolic world, a world of language and a world of things where the former represents the latter. Furthermore, speech is viewed as a later add-on to human nature, a tool or invention (Anton, 2001, p. 85). The problem with this position, Anton maintains, is that it underestimates the indigenous nature of sonorousness to human existence. Despite being learned from and with others, speech is not an invention. Although radically different in its spatial and temporal appropriations, speech is as natural to the self as the other bodily senses (Anton, 2001). Anton seeks to demonstrate that contrary to much literature on the topic language is not merely given to us, nor does it bestow

sociality. This belief is fostered by overly rigid distinctions between self and other, as opposed to an understanding of self and other as mutually arising correlates of the same condition, i.e. existence. Once these individualist orientations to selfhood abate, we find that as an intentional power sonorousness "most clearly demonstrates the fact that we are social in our being" (p. 87).

The second group consists of those authors who exaggerate the role of language in "constructing" reality, and suggest that "speech provides nothing but reification *and* that this is reality" (Anton, 2001, p. 88). Said otherwise, any description of reality or phenomena is just that, a linguistic description. Neither reality nor phenomena exist outside of us "saying so". Social constructionists and most if not all of the postmodern tradition is based upon this understanding of language. Authors such as Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, etc, all argue that there is no meaning outside of texts/discourse. Even Stewart falls under indictment due to his insinuation that all meaning stems from language practices (ibid). Anton argues that he is negligent regarding the self's other powers for understanding. That is, Stewart ignores the ways in which a gentle touch, a loving glance, or even the petting of an animal, conveys meaning.

If the above is not the case, what is speech's relation to self and world? In his chapter on the lived-body's sensory capacities for manifesting world, Anton (2001) discusses a triadic relationship between "an intending, an intended, and the *intendableness*. For example, when listening to music we have the hearing (our aural sense), the heard (the music), and the very *hearableness* of the music. We might ask the question, is the *hearableness* in the music, or is it in our sensory capacity of hearing? Asked otherwise, is it located in the subject or object *per se*? The answer is that it is in

both, or neither (Anton, 2001). Again, an understatement relegates language to the status of a tool used to represent preexisting objects, thoughts, people, etc, whereas an overstatement of speech's powers suggests that all is but a creation of language.

Like the other intentional powers, speech has the same triadic configuration. When speaking about the music we have the speaking, the thing spoken about, and the "*speakableness*" (Anton, 2001, p. 88). Contrary to either the understatement or the overstatement a phenomenological rendering suggests that "this 'sayableness' of world [and] self cannot be reductively derived from either the world or the subject. It is, on the contrary, a dialogic constitution" (ibid). *Sayableness* is thus as indigenous to world as it is to selfhood. Again, they are mutually arising correlates of one another and come to "meaningful fruition" only in relation to both (Anton, 2001, p. 89). The concept of *intendableness* is crucial and will be returned to later. For now it is important only to recognize that although subjects can be talked about through the lens of various historically rooted patterns of discourse, this does not preclude the notion of individuals as embodied subjects with agentive speech as one of our indigenous dimensions.

Given the above we can now proceed, through Foucault, to analyze how more debased (i.e. individualistic) treatments of individuals can adversely affect both self and society. To accomplish this, various promulgators of technological discourse are analyzed to reveal the various rhetorical devices operating within their speech. Given the previously argued position on the *sayableness* of existence, we can more confidently articulate modes and avenues of resistance to unmitigated technological change. In short, we can heed the call of authenticity issued throughout this project, and in relation to our technological environments.

Discipline and Discourse

To understand the disciplining function of technological discourse we must first understand Foucault's notion of "power". Foucault conceived of power as initially pertaining to the physical body. He states, "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). In this conception of power, attention is paid particularly to the body as it can be manipulated, shaped, trained, etc. Larger coercive institutions arose that were capable of systematically regulating operations of the body within established spatial and temporal movements. However, Foucault argued that unlike older monastic forms of discipline, which were limited in both scale and form, the more modern exercise of power worked through a "subtle coercion" (pp. 136-137). In this sense power becomes an act of disciplining on a macro scale. It becomes a means of tacitly controlling large groups of individuals and turning them into productive, obedient, and useful subjects. I return to "discipline" later. For now I address another importantly related concept, *knowledge.*

Knowledge is another key concept to understanding the disciplining function of technological discourse. Foucault conceived of both knowledge and power as inextricably linked. He states that, "Power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another; [and] there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1997, p. 27). Accordingly, each society has its own discourses of truth, ways of speaking, organizing, and getting things done. It is within these societal discourses that subjects arise. Foucault's project sought to uncover how at any given point in history, systems of truth arose concomitantly with/as a

regime of power. The human sciences (psychology, sociology, medicine, etc.) are particularly relevant examples of systems of power/knowledge. Operating tacitly throughout particular societies, the human sciences are forms of power precisely due to their claims to knowledge/Truth (Foucault, 1977; 1980). Technological discourse operates similarly through a tacit privileging of its view of humanity. Given the proclivities of Western culture toward privileging scientific discourse, I argue that technological discourse garners a similarly prominent stature. Relevant here is Weaver's notion of "ultimate terms" (Weaver, 1965). Ultimate terms are those particular terms within a culture to which the highest respect and deference is paid by the people. These terms usually go unchallenged and become a primary rhetorical means for encouraging individuals to move toward particular ideals.

Ultimate terms are also divided into three categories consisting of "god", "devil", and "charismatic terms". God terms serve as the highest attainable good within a culture and therefore can justifiably demand individual sacrifice (Weaver, 1965, p. 212). Conversely, devil terms represent the greatest detriments or evils within a culture (1965, p. 222). With reference to technology, "Luddite" has often served as the devil term in direct opposition to the purported boon of new technologies. Luddites are rhetorically shaped and perceived as individuals who stand in the way of technological prosperity, and as such are demonized as opponents of the common good brought about by new technologies. Thus, anyone who questions or criticizes certain forms of technology is cast as someone opposed to all forms of change and progress. Responsible and ethical interrogation is presented as backwards fundamentalism aimed at turning back the clock of civilization itself. Here not only is technology privileged but alternative claims to a

meaningful life are cast as "short, brutish, disease-filled, poverty-filled and disaster prone" (Ewalt, 2005). Kurzweil (2005) rhetorically paints the above individuals as typically Luddite in nature, "because of the reflexive stance against technological solutions to outstanding problems" (p. 415).

Among his more clever rhetorical denunciations is his coupling of "Luddite" with another powerfully evocative symbol, "fundamentalist". A section heading in chapter seven entitled *The Threat from Fundamentalism* begins with a paragraph on the imminent and "especially pernicious" threat of radical Islamic terrorism (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 414). He argues that although it appears these terrorists are solely after wanton violence, their real agenda is to "turn the clock back on such modern ideas as democracy, women's rights, and education" (ibid). Interestingly enough Kurzweil uses this example as a segue into his denunciation of Luddites. By leading in with his description of fundamentalist Islamic terrorists and drawing attention to the fact that they too are concerned with halting progress, the rhetorical force is carried over to the Luddite, who like the fundamentalist Islamic terrorist desire only to "turn the clock back". Prior to this point he uses "fundamentalist *and* Luddites" however, in the section described in chapter seven he loses the "and" to refer to this group as "fundamentalist Luddites" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 415). At first glance this may not appear a serious move, however upon a closer inspection we see extremely powerful images surface as to the dangerousness of anything perceived to be "Luddite". By tying the terrorist to the Luddite in regard to the latter's purported desire to halt progress Kurzweil also ties the Luddite to the terrorist in regard to his/her propensity for violence. This reciprocal link is especially potent given the current political climate.

Through the appropriation of one term, "Luddite", Kurzweil and others brush aside any opposition to exponential technological growth, regardless of its consequences. This closes off important dialogue concerning technological development and appropriation, and leaves most citizens out of the decision making process.

Charismatic terms, unlike god and devil terms, operate independently of any referent or connection. They function through conventional usage within a culture. Furthermore, the rhetorical power of charismatic terms stems from the inability to clearly define and identify instances of the term (1965, p. 227). These terms surreptitiously call for sacrifice and obedience through some generalized and conventional attribution of worth or importance. Terms and phrases such as "troop support", "spreading of freedom", "homeland security", "fighting evil", etc, are all examples of charismatic terms. What the invocators of the above charismatic terms fail to reveal is that such freedom and security often materialize from the use of military technologies including guns, bombs, missiles, and surveillance technology. It is a case of the ends purportedly justifying the means.

Given the above we can see how god terms such as *technology*, *progress*, and *evolution*, function as regimes of power/knowledge. These particular terms and discourses operate surreptitiously, disguising themselves as absolutes and universals. Again, given the proclivities of Western sensibilities toward science and *expertise*, these discourses circulate largely unquestioned and unchallenged. However, there are problems with this uncritical allegiance. Upon closer inspection we may find alternative interpretations of "technology" and "progress" that fly in the face of more beneficent readings of the terms. Lewis Mumford insightfully suggests this in *Technics and*

Civilization where he comments on the naiveté regarding technological progress/change and states,

> Unfortunately change and accumulation work in both directions: energies may be dissipated, institutions may decay, and societies may pile up evils and burdens as well as goods and benefits. To assume that a later point in development necessarily brings a higher kind of society is merely to confuse the neutral quality of complexity or maturity with improvement. To assume that a later point in time necessarily carries a greater accumulation of values is to forget the recurrent facts of barbarism and degradation (1934, p. 184).

A more complete explication of Foucault's "discipline" within particular technological discourses further demonstrates the rhetorical power at work. When proselytized from various scientific pulpits, this discourse becomes an extremely influential power grid which encourages debased and hence, inauthentic, modes of being. A more poignant example of this reveals itself in the form of what Taylor refers to as *instrumental reason*. "The fear is that things that ought to be determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of efficiency or 'cost-benefit' analysis, that the independent ends that ought to be guiding our lives will be eclipsed by the demand to maximize output" (Taylor, 1991, p. 5). Such is the case when the rhetoric of economic growth is used to justify grotesque class disparity, or when it is used to override environmental concerns. The contradictory logic is that the goods of the many outweigh the goods of the few, while in reality it is the many who are hardest hit whereas the few (roughly the upper ten percent) benefit the most. For example, from 1989-2001 it is estimated that 79.8% of U.S. wealth was owned by the top 10% of the population, with 32.7% of U.S. wealth being controlled by the top 1% of the population (Kennickell, 2003). This left the bottom 50% of the population in control of a meager 2.8% of the wealth (ibid).

Likewise, Kurzweil is unabashed in his arguments for sustained technological advancement where he asserts, "The ongoing acceleration of many intertwined technologies produces *roads paved with gold*...In a competitive environment it is *an economic imperative* to go down these roads. Relinquishing technological advancement would be *economic suicide* for individuals, companies, and nations"[5] (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 410). Disciplinary functions of technological discourse frequently appear within this "cost-benefit" mentality. Remember, as a form of power discipline regulates the movements and operations of the body in a constant way. "Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (*in economic terms of utility*)[6] and diminished these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). This is akin to the aforementioned "instrumental reason", whereby we "calculate the most economical application of means to a given end. Maximum efficiency, the best cost-output ratio, is its measure of success" (Taylor, 1991, p. 5). Again, Kurzweil argues through economic metaphors when he contends, "By 2030 it will take a village of human brains (around one thousand) to match a thousand dollars' worth of computing..."By 2050, one thousand dollars of computing will exceed the processing power of all human brains on Earth" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 127). Here we see the human body compared in terms of information processing power (and ill favorably at that), but also to economic worth. This *return on investment* mentality would not be so easily accepted if not for the first rhetorical sleight of hand previously discussed in chapter two, which encourages us to view the body as a machine, and communicative phenomena as the processing of information.

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[5] Italics added
[6] Italics added

We must remember that for Foucault, power was essentially positive. He contends that if power were strictly an oppressive and marginalizing force, people would not concede to it so willingly (Foucault, 1980). If we can speak of the body as a piece of technology, then we can subject it to other metaphors of performance, cost, and production. Both technology and technological discourse *is* production, which is subsequently realized in consumption of the latest brand of phone, the fastest computer, or latest corporeal augmentation, and through individual fulfillment (i.e. the fulfillment of owning these products be they computers, phones, or fake breasts). The knowledge that we are *beautiful, hooked up*, *wired*, or otherwise *in*, is central to the disciplining function of technological discourse. "Discipline rewards simply by the play of awards, thus making it possible to attain higher ranks and places; it punishes by reversing this process" (Foucault, 1977, p. 181).

We find that "hierarchical observation", the "normalizing judgment", and "examination", are also important to discipline. Hierarchical observation is an attribute or "exercise" of power that disciplines through the gaze or a "network of gazes" (Foucault, 1977). Foucault traces how institutions such as the school, hospital, and prison, created observatories, thus replacing physical coercion with the coercive "gaze". It was a method of seeing "without being seen" (1977, p. 171). This was a subtle yet powerful means of controlling bodies in a systematized and organized way. We can see how both technology and the discourse that surrounds it operate through the gaze. Certainly the increasingly pervasive use of government and corporate surveillance technologies illustrates the gaze in a much more obvious manner. We find that, "The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly" (Foucault, 1977, p. 173).

We need only observe how notions of "safety" and the "war on terror" are employed to justify power grids consisting of the use of government surveillance. We can also turn to notions of "productivity" along with other organizational codes for workplace behavior to witness the justification of monitoring employees.

However, more directly related to this project, I argue that the voyeuristic nature of many new forms of social networking sites and communicative technologies discipline through observational tactics. The following is an example of how the gaze operates within seemingly innocuous technology.

Facebook and the Gaze

Facebook is a website devoted to college students that allows users to display pictures, post personal information, socially network, etc. As such, the primary mediums for this website are digitally "remediated" photography and print (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). To register all one needs is an active university email address. Students from the same college are able to view anyone's Facebook page, as long as they are at the same school or at a geographically affiliated university.

Be it a social networking site, an online directory, or a virtual community, the impact and power of Facebook cannot be underestimated. In just under two years of existence facebook.com has over six million members at more than twenty-one hundred colleges, and it is said that at least fifteen thousand new accounts are added daily (Coomes, 2005). As of January 2006, the site ranks a surprising ninth in overall internet traffic (Bugeja, 2006). Frequently, words such as "obsession", "craze", and "cult", are used by Facebook members to describe this seemingly uncontrollable devotion. According to one reporter for the Washington Post, "The Facebook has a way of taking

over a school's culture. Students talk about checking their accounts four or five times a day" (Copeland, 2004). Another telling example comes from a journalism professor from the University of Colorado. During a discussion he asked his class of 140 students how many had watched the previous nights broadcast of PBS's *NewsHour*, or had recently read a nationally syndicated newspaper such as *The New York Times*. Out of 140 students only a few hands went up. He then recounts how one student prodded him to ask how many use Facebook, upon which every hand went up. He then proceeded to ask how many students had used Facebook that morning and again, all hands were raised (Bugeja, 2006).

This popularity begs the question, what is it about Facebook that commands such reflexive devotion from its members? As previously argued, one reason is that any new technology is tacitly accepted as *progress*. As such the source of this obsession more relates to the power that Facebook gives its members to scrutinize, judge, and objectify others. The camera, according to McLuhan, "tends to turn people into things, and the photograph extends and multiplies the human image to the proportions of mass-produced merchandise" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 170). The mass-production and distribution of photographs is only made easier through the digitalization of the image. Digital technology has turned our desktop and laptop computers into miniature and instantaneous photo labs where we can shoot, print, copy, email, and in the case of Facebook upload, any number of images we desire. A closer look at some of the features of Facebook will aid our understanding of its disciplinary powers.

"This is You"

Once logged on to the main profile section of Facebook, one is drawn first to the main picture of the account holder. A caption above reads, "This is you". Given the image-driven nature of American culture, this is arguably the most representative aspect of one's Facebook page. The notion of "browsing" others is certainly not novel to Facebook, one need only reference classifieds and/or other dating services. However, given the medium and packaging of Facebook it has taken voyeurism to new socially acceptable (and individually compulsive) levels. In addition to the main photograph one is able to create photo albums that are accessible to both them and their friends. "'You stare into it FOR-EV-ER,' says Melissa Doman, a George Washington University sophomore, turning away from her laptop for a moment. 'You lose all track of time.'... 'You can wander through profiles of people you wish you knew, imagining what they must be like'" (Copeland, 2004).

Supporting and enhancing the photographic feature of Facebook is its written component. The written component allows one to list a wide range of general information about oneself including type of sex/gender one is interested in, relationship status, type of relationship sought, residence, dorm room, hometown, etc. Additionally, one has available a personal section that states one's political views, activities, interests, favorite music, books, and quotes, and an open space entitled "about me". Combined with the photographic, the print feature is a systematic and concretized representation of self that objectifies individuals through the storage of information about oneself in a manner indigenous to the particular mediums (i.e. remediated photography and print). This exemplifies another of McLuhan's insights as to one of the basic functions of media, "to

store and to expedite information" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 146). Users are digitally stored as categorized profiles and information. This is yet another example of the disciplining function of certain media, its ability to manage large masses of individuals in a systematized and efficient manner while holding them to culturally specified and objectified standards.

As users of Facebook are limited to the parameters of both the software and medium, the way one represents oneself is through categorically stereotyped and homogenized ways. According to one journalist Facebook "provides everything today's savvy college kid needs. It *maps out the cool kids and the purposeful freaks, the most popular music and the least*"[7] (Copeland, 2004). What one often finds then when browsing Facebook profiles is that the status quo is almost assuredly maintained through the gaze of others. Facebook allows individuals to gauge their social standing. A prominent category lists how many "friends" one has. Whether or not one actually knows the "friend" outside of the Facebook experience matters not. "You can compare the number of 'friends' you have listed in your profile to the number of 'friends' your roommate has, to calibrate how good you should feel about yourself. If your number is low, you can message some people you met at last night's party, asking if they, too, will be your 'friends.'" (Copeland, 2004). This provides a quantifiable measurement of one's social and sexual prowess. A symbolic connection is thus made between the user and his or her number of "friends", both by numerical and photographic representation[8]. "Sexual experience is no longer the act but its mirrored or photographic image" (Carpenter, 1973, p. 5). This explains not only photographs of blatant sexual activity but more subtly in this

[7] Italics added
[8] In addition to the numerical listing of how many "friends" one has, each "friend's" account photo is displayed.

case to the way in which a user is symbolically linked to the photo of his or her "friends". The more "friends" one has and the greater the perceived "beauty" of those friends, the more socially and sexually attractive one becomes.

Simply put, social networking sites such as *Facebook* put individuals and their lives on public display, subjecting them to the "gaze" of others. The print and photographic elements that comprise the site solidify and commodify the self, draping individuals in digital *for-sale* signs. The advertisements are seamlessly intertwined with the user, both neatly packaged and framed by the computer screen. Cyberspace, it seems, is as economically salient as physical space. Said otherwise, on Facebook users participate not only in the sale of merchandise but in the sale of themselves. The products for sale on an individual's profile end up *wearing* them. One's account is a billboard (i.e. the *norm*) for popular cultural artifacts such as certain music, movies, political views, television shows, etc[9]. Again, the user becomes the packaging of his or her cultural products. Through this process both the overt advertisements and the categorical biographies on Facebook discipline individuals. There are several "taken for granteds", which suggest that to have the latest cell phone, computer, body, etc, is not a matter of choice. Also, the kinds of books, music, movies, shows, etc, one consumes is similarly enforced through this tacit discipline. That is, one would not simply choose *not* to consume the latest and greatest. You posses it, listen to it, watch it, or you do not. If you choose the latter then you are subject to a lower place on the cultural totem pole.

[9] Interestingly enough, as of the writing of this project the creators and CEOs of Facebook are closing in on a deal with Yahoo to sell the site for around one billion dollars (Read, 2006). As this move would open Facebook up to anyone with internet access, intense criticism is mounting from current Facebook users who cite privacy issues as their main concern.

Thus, the gaze and normalizing judgment sustain each other. All disciplinary discourses have within them their own established rules (i.e. norms). Any deviation from these norms results in various forms of punishment, appropriate to the particular discourse or norm. As previously argued the norm for technology is possession. Again, if as Weaver (1995) suggests, progress functions as a god term that commands sacrifice, then progress entails assimilating new technologies, i.e. participating in or possessing them. Cleverly enough, sacrifice in technological discourse becomes masked by the social rewards of being *switched on*, *hooked up*, or *in*. That is, ceaselessly consuming products with upgraded bells and whistles becomes a sign of status, a passport to the norm. In addition to the previously mentioned norms that are enforced through one's Facebook profile, Facebook also entails having an account and being technologically savvy, thereby *progressing* with the rest of society. It has also been used by faculty and campus police to observe and discipline students from the university, one more means of power to control large masses of people (*See* Maternowski, 2006).

The consequences felt by the technological pariah may at first glance seem insignificant. However, we need but take a closer look to find very serious and potentially deleterious effects. In addition to the many psychological effects of being a cultural outcast there are other dangerous material consequences. For example, if as it is argued technological progress becomes the norm, and as access to certain resources become more technologically *wired*, then what happens to those who do not have equal access to either the technology or the know-how to use it? Genetic enhancements are no different in this sense. Enhanced IQ's, physical prowess, and "beauty" will undoubtedly not come cheap. As in the previous example a very real consequence of unrestrained genetic

engineering is that it will be accessible only to those who can afford it. In this way the formidable gaps between the *haves* and the *have-nots* will more accurately resemble gulfs. Genetic disparity will join class disparity as a major force that furthers inequality and oppression.

When and where does this allegiance end? At what point can we ease up on the reins of technological evolution? Some would suggest that the answer is "never". As Kurzweil suggests, "Ultimately, the entire universe will become saturated with our intelligence. This is the *destiny*[10] of the universe. We will determine our own fate rather than have it determined by the current 'dumb,' simple, machinelike forces that rule celestial mechanics" (2005, p. 29). This is typical of the unending pursuit of the latest and greatest, whether it is communicative or biologically enhancing (and surpassing) technologies. Possession is the norm; it is the standard to which people are held. According to this rhetoric, whatever does not meet the rule is opposed to it.

In concordance with the above we find that disciplinary punishment also favors exercise. These "intensified, multiplied forms of training" regulate behavior and serve as corrective forms of punishment (Foucault, 1977, p. 179). This corrective aspect serves to reform those who deviate from the norm. In technological discourse it is encouragement of the integration and perpetual use of these technologies that becomes a form of exercise.

Ideological Tech Apparatuses

Moving largely out of Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, Althusser (1971) claimed that it is through the performance of various institutionalized rituals that ideologies are believed. Furthermore, individual subjects materialize through these

[10] Italics added

performances. Similarly then, cell phones, ipods, laptops, and other technologies, act as agents for the reproduction of hegemony through ritualized performances of particular modes of communication and entertainment. It is in this manner that ideological cycles are perpetuated and maintained.

Therefore, as an *Ideological Tech Apparatus*, communicative technologies such as *Facebook* become a ritualized, social means of managing both identities and cultural norms. Borrowing specifically from Althusser (1971) and more generally from the Media Ecology tradition, I use the term "Ideological Tech Apparatus" to describe any mass-medium that tacitly produces and re-produces various ideologies. While Althusser (1971) was interested in the ways that various institutions (*Ideological State Apparatuses*) reproduced hegemony, media ecologists explore the way in which various technologies, as environments, impact individuals and societies.

Thus, the very act of checking our Facebook account, turning on a television, downloading music, listening to a *podcast*, or checking our email, etc, is the performance of a ritual through which cultural ideologies are understood and believed. In the example of *Facebook*, cultural sensibilities regarding popularity, normality, and desirability, are manifested through the interaction within a particular medium, i.e. the internet. Said differently, individual identities constructed on Facebook, via pre-established categories and photographs, become what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) referred to as "nodal points." As such, these "nodal points" render our cultural norms and identities intelligible, and thus, they can be employed by other individuals, in other contexts, and through other mediums. We can quite literally see what others are wearing, what music they are

listening to, and what political views they hold, if any. Put simply, we can see what is "normal."

Similarly, Foucault's notion of *governmentality* is relevant (Foucault, 1991; Gordon, 1991). G*overnmentality* refers to, "All those more or less rationalized programmes and strategies for 'the conduct of conduct'" (Rose, 1996/1997, p. 134). Whether these programs of behavior come from a government, a corporation, an organization, the public school system, or in this case a medium, is irrelevant. What we must track then is, "The emergence of...rationalities or mentalities of rule, where rule becomes a matter of the calculated management of the affairs of each and of all in order to achieve certain desirable objectives" (Rose, 1996/1997, p. 134).

Although the modern subject differs from Foucault's, combining the notion of *governmentality* with phenomenological notions of embodiment can provide further insight regarding the disciplining function of technological discourse. I would argue that the embodied subject and Foucault's *governmentality* are not mutually exclusive. While the latter examines ways that macro discourses arise historically and become standardized programs of consent and obedience, the former provides authentic and responsible forms of communicative engagement. Again, when subsumed within an *Ideological Tech Apparatus* (e.g. the Internet), both standardized discourses surrounding technological progress and individual appropriations of technologies tend towards hegemony.

Avenues of Resistance

Technological discourse then is a direct form of power/knowledge and disciplines through a number of techniques including the privileging of scientific discourse, the

employment of "god terms" and "devil terms", the "gaze" (as illustrated by technologies such as *Facebook*), and subsequently, "normalization" and punishment of "deviants" (the trend of possessing products, i.e. *keeping up*). The exercising function of technological possession and the economic equivocation of "cost-benefit" ideology are also key examples of the disciplining process. If Rockler (2003) is correct and criticisms of cultural products are denigrated as individual hang-ups, how then does one avoid falling prey to these inauthentic treatments of the self?

The way back is to resituate Foucault within that which he disavows, an embodied subject as creator of, not merely arising in, discourse. The problem with Foucault's dismissal of the human subject is that it ignores important insights that are illuminated through a phenomenological account of selfhood. His treatment of the subject ignores ways in which technological discourse directly impacts the self. As I have already argued, sonorousness is a unique dimension of selfhood. As such Foucault misses the fact pointed out in chapter one of this thesis, that discourse is an embodied sense which uniquely spatializes and temporalizes world. Thus, embodiment is the very ontological grounding that makes any and all discursive power possible.

The beginning of this chapter discussed the triadic nature of sonorousness, the speaking, the spoken about, and the *speakableness* (Anton, 2001). As previously argued sonorousness is the most radical of the lived-body's intentional powers, though still as indigenous to existence as are our powers of sight, touch, hearing, etc. Furthermore, each of these bodily powers manifests experiences in their own peculiar and proper way. Thus when talking *about* something or someone, one is not merely representing a preexisting object or individual, nor is one creating reality through some form of social

constructionism or semiosis. Quite to the contrary, one is dialogically co-revealing both particular and abstract manifestations of "world-experience" (Anton, 2001, p. 91). And so when we consider any phenomena, be it an object, a person, an idea, etc, "We are interested in it according to its peculiar disclosedness given by the different ways we meaningfully take it under concern (e.g., looking at it, sitting on it, calculating about it, speaking about it, etc.)" (Anton, 2001, p. 89).

Consequently, in addition to caring, concerned, or otherwise constructive possibilities, sonorousness enables more depreciative and inauthentic modes of worldly disclosure, e.g. uncritical allegiance to unfettered technological integration/advance. However, regardless of the modes of world-disclosure dialogically enacted by various technological prophets, we need not share in these manifestations. In interacting with these technologies and technological texts, we can choose to appropriate alternate modes of care in relation to them.

We are creators of discourse who both act with and are acted upon by it. Foucault's insights highlight the latter while dismissing the former altogether. This chapter then, argues for a re-claiming of the modern human subject while still acknowledging the benefits of Foucault's insights on historical discourse.

By his own admission we see how discipline operates through spatially and temporally organizing bodies in particular ways. However, Foucault misses the role that embodiment plays in the spatial and temporally configured lived-body. Thus, if we incorporate Foucault's concepts with insights from the phenomenological and media ecology traditions, we have a powerful and comprehensive theoretical model for addressing both discursive and material impacts of new technologies on self and society.

Authentically Engaged

In addition to the arguments presented throughout this work there is a general and misleading societal trend, which peddles technology as the corrective for all social ills. Technology, we are told, is the only cure for the vices of society including poverty, sickness, racism, class-ism, etc. While this argument appears sound on the surface, a closer inspection reveals that this is merely another means of maintaining the status quo through the consumption and integration of various technologies. Said otherwise, many argue that individuals need only possess these technologies and political, social, and economic indiscretions will all but disappear through equal access to both higher quality of life and information.

Kurzweil (2005) tells us, "In the end, it is only technology—especially GNR [genetics, nanotechnology, robotics]—that will offer the leverage needed to overcome problems that human civilization has struggled with for many generations" (p. 415). However, this line of argument ignores the destructive impacts of these technologies on a variety of issues including environmental damage, poverty, racism, and other socio-political concerns. Some of these concerns were discussed in chapter four, including the dumping of hazardous electronic waste in poorer communities around the world, downsizing, and increasing workweeks. As Shah (2006) suggests, in the unending pursuit of the latest and greatest we ignore important questions, such as:

- "How are the products and resources we consume actually produced?"
- "What are the impacts of that process of production on the environment, society, on individuals?"
- "Which actors [agents] influence our choices of consumption?"

- "Which actors influence how and why things are produced or not?"
- "What is a necessity and what is a luxury?"
- "How much of what we consume is influenced by their [corporate] needs versus our needs?" And finally,
- "How do material values influence our relationships with other people?"

In response to the last question, I argue that the saturation of personalized, communicative technologies significantly contribute to social withdrawal thereby weakening communal and political engagement. Much like *reality* television, cell phones have increasingly brought the private into the public while at the same time allowing individuals to be publicly private. People now air their every grievance and tale of gossip in public settings. They become oblivious to all else around them including oftentimes the others they are with. The notion of a public sphere is increasingly disappearing as digital technology proliferates.

A similar experience is occurring with the increasing saturation of mp3 players such as the *Apple iPod*. The *iPod* is a digital audio player that allows one to download, transfer, listen to, or otherwise organize his or her music library. As of 2005 there are an estimated twenty-two million *iPod* owners in the United States alone, which does not count owners of similar, competitor products. Sullivan (2005) notes an all-too-common trend occurring in major metropolitan cities, an increased retreat from social engagement. He argues that this is due in no small part to the inherent biases of this medium. These mediums have "given us a universe entirely for ourselves—where the serendipity of meeting a new stranger, hearing a piece of music we would never choose for ourselves or

an opinion the might force us to change our mind about something are all effectively banished" (Sullivan, 2005).

Recall that Postman (1985) distinguishes between a technology and a medium. If Postman's distinction is correct then our culture's uncritical allegiance to technological progress indicates that as Americans, we experience the world in terms of these trite and individualistic concerns (i.e. *what's hot, what's not*, etc.) Said otherwise, our appropriation of technology offers a glimpse into expectations of the world. In phenomenological terms, we *are* our appropriations, activities, cares, and concerns. Thus, our increasingly *inward-turning* precedent tears at the social and political fabric. The implications are far reaching including, "A society in which people end up as the kind of individuals who are 'enclosed in their own hearts'...where few will want to participate actively in self-government. They will prefer to stay at home and enjoy the satisfactions of private life, as long as the government [or technology] of the day produces the means to these satisfactions and distributes them widely" (Taylor, 1991, p. 9). Said otherwise, we are satisfied as long as we possess viable and plentiful forms of entertainment. As beings, "seeking significance in life, trying to define [ourselves] meaningfully," (Taylor, 1991) we may in fact be celebrating and consuming these products at our own peril.

When discussing the "religion of technology", David Noble (1999) argues that technological enthusiasts operate within an ideological milieu where the motivation for technological progress does not come from a desire to better humanity. Quite to the contrary, *technology as panacea*, the most obvious and often knee-jerk argument for unmitigated technological advancement, is a ruse enacted for a *higher* purpose. Noble states, "On a deeper cultural level, these technologies have not met basic human needs

because, at bottom, they have never really been about meeting them. They have been aimed rather at the loftier goal of transcending such mortal concerns altogether" (Noble, 1999, p. 207). Whether driven by fear, benevolence, or both, one of the techo-prophet's main aspirations is to obtain god-like power and control over our sheer animal mortality, control over death. It appears quite often that many of the most zealous proponents of unmitigated technological advancement exhibit this same need to transcend and "upend biology altogether" (Kurzweil, 2005).

Again, Noble tells us, "In such an ideological context, inspired more by prophets than by profits[11], the needs neither of mortals nor of the earth they inhabit are of any enduring consequence. And it is here that the religion of technology can rightly be considered a menace" (Noble, 1999). Menacing due to the tyranny unleashed upon humanity through the "cost-benefit" analyses of human lives. This is in addition the cultural triviality and social withdrawal recently elucidated. The technological prophets come to us as saviors, purveyors of technological goodwill, and benefactors of nature and humankind. When in reality they are no more than the rhetorical *wolf in sheep's clothing.*

Authenticity and Communication

The ultimate questions this project raises deal with the nature of the "animal possessing logos", and some of the moral forces at work on this self-aware and speaking creature. I argued that in order to liberate individuals from oppressive structures and discourses, rhetorical critics need to re-claim the modern subject, a self that is embodied and capable of action. However, we must do so without falling prey to various discourses

[11] Despite Noble's insight on the motives of the techno-prophets, he seems to let them slightly off the hook by suggesting that economic incentive is subordinate to divine intervention. When in history have *prophets* ever been opposed to *profits*?

that would use this conception of self along with its corresponding *bootstrap* mentality to silence and oppress.

Through our modern quest for authenticity I explored the moral force at work behind our culture's penchant for increasing technological progress and integration, and how disembodied forms of communication impact both self and others. Additionally, I tracked how various *prophets* of technology engage in discourse that not only encourages consent and sacrifice but also shifts attention away from problems best conceived as social to individual problems needing individual and therapeutic attention. Consequently, the therapeutic materializes in the form of personalized escapisms and ultimately, through the possession of various technological devices capable of entertaining us on any and all occasions.

Again, we need not pit the embodied self against the interpolated self, as much scholarship on human subjectivity does. We must remember that our articulations and theories on selfhood are just that, articulations and theories. Thus, rather than being preoccupied with questions concerning which theories happen to be more *true* or in vogue at one given time or another, we need to ask questions regarding how our theories on subjectivity either enable or constrain (Burke, 1965). That is, do our theories enrich or otherwise contribute to the betterment of society, or do they constrain us, thereby limiting other means of resisting inauthentic cultural discourses? As communication scholars we must recognize the importance of producing responsible and ethical inquiries about the human self.

As Abraham Heschel (1965) states, "*Humanity is not something he* [or she] *comes upon in the recesses of the self. He* [or she] *always looks for a model or an example to*

follow. What determines one's being human is the image one adopts" (p. 8). Thus, are we to offer an image of the self that is detached from the production and perpetuation of meaning, or are we going to endow individuals with the creative and agentive powers inherent to an embodied subject? I argue for the latter.

An embodied subject, one from which discourse originates, reassumes the reins of his or her own position within fields of power. It is true that objectifications and marginalization can and do occur when people speak, both for themselves and others. However, it is also true that this discourse circulates and is either perpetuated or challenged from within individual speech practices. Once a particular discourse has been espoused by enough people and/or through the media, it may seem as if it has taken on a life of its own. Yet it still is within the ability of individuals to reject a particular discourse, or not. In the case of technological discourse, we can choose *not* to acquiesce to the prophets of unyielding technological integration. On the consumer side, we can choose not to purchase each gadget that is proclaimed "the next great thing". We can also interrogate basic principles regarding technological progress, consumption, and the relationship between self, others, and society. However, we cannot simply rest on these small acts of defiance and resistance. We must, more importantly, recognize our responsibility to the production of meaning and significance in the world; we must answer the call of authenticity (Taylor, 1991). As Taylor maintains,

> "I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what

matters...Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands" (1991, pp. 40-41).

Thus, answering the call of authenticity often means interrogating many of the individualistic proclivities and assumptions cultivated by disciplinary and therapeutic discourse. Although certainly not ending oppression, marginalization, and trivialness, authenticity, as a critical tool, can serve as a means of subverting more dominant and objectified, cultural ideologies. This is an important shift in rhetorical theorizing that can serve as a strong, moral foundation for conducting criticism.

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